 **Minutes**

**Schools Forum**

Notes of meeting on 28th September 2021

**Members:**

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| Frieda Perry (FP)  | Chair - Primary School rep (Hatfeild) |
| Kirsten Heard (KH) | Secondary School rep (Raynes Park High School) |
| Carole Cook (CC) | 14-19 rep (TRP Ltd)  |
| Phyllis Sternberg (PS)  | Academies rep (Beecholme) |
| Carla Chandler (CC)  | Special School rep (Melrose)  |
| Hamish Dowlen (HD) | Secondary School Gov rep (Raynes Park |
| Paul Lufkin (PL)  | Primary School rep (Wimbledon Park) |
| Steve Donegan (SD) | Primary School rep (Malmesbury) |

**In Attendance:**

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| Nick Wilson (NW) | LBM CSF - Safety Valve Programme Lead |
| Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (EF) | LBM CSF - Assistant Director for Education and Early Help |
| Patricia Harvey (PH) | LBM CSF – Finance |
| Andrew Good (AG)  | LBM CSF – Finance |
| Jayne Ward (JW) | LBM CSF – Finance |
| Colette Levingston (CL) | LBM CSF – Finance |
| Robyn Northcott (RN) | LBM CSF – Note Taker  |
| Nicki Raine (BR) | Observer - Local Authority Stakeholder Engagement Team |
| Harriet Pratley (HP) | Observer- DfE - Funding Policy Unit |

**Apologies:**

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| Fiona Duffy (FD)  | Primary School rep (Dundonald) |
| Fr Simon Peat (FSP) | Primary Governor rep (St Mary’s) |
| Julia Waters (JW) | Secondary School rep (Ursuline) |
| Lee Mallin (LM) | Academies Governor rep (Harris Morden) |
| Allison Jones (AJ) | LBM CSF – Early Years, Family Wellbeing and Early Help |

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| **Item 1** | **Welcome and introduction** |
|  | FP welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.FP introduced Harriet Pratley and Nicki Raine who are observing today’s meeting.  |
| **Item 2** | **Minutes from previous meeting** |
|  | The minutes of the meeting held on 24th June 2021 were agreed for accuracy. |
| **Item 3** | **DSG Safety Valve update** |
|  | NW shared slides outlining the pressures on the DSG and reasons behind this, as well as proposals to address this. Key points to note: * Merton has a large and growing resident EHCP cohort driven by high rates of requests for EHCP assessments, the majority of which result in EHCPs being issued.
* There are also large numbers attending out-of-borough state-funded special schools resulting in high SEND transport spend.
* A large proportion of Merton residents with EHCPs attend independent schools, resulting in the largest per-capita budget for top-up funding of independent schools in England.
* In 2020, there were 418 requests for an EHCP assessment. This represents 0.68% of the 0 to 24 year old population. This is the fourth highest rate of EHCP requests in England.
* 174 additional places are being made available in the borough for pupils with an EHCP.

There is a Schools Forum DSG sub-group in place supporting with this piece of work and a meeting took place last week with this group. The Local Authority have an introductory meeting with DfE officials and ESFA on 12th October which will include a presentation from Merton. There have been 6 Safety Valve negotiations nationally, resulting in additional contributions being made into the DSG for these authorities. It is not known at this point if Merton will receive a contribution into the DSG but in this case there would be an agreed action plan to be met.   |
| **Item 4** | **NNF Publication for Schools and High Needs 2022-23** |
|  | PH shared paper for information. In July, the Department for Education (DfE) published an update on the policy paper of the National Funding Formula (NFF) 2022-23 and high needs. At this stage, this does not provide schools with an accurate budget allocation for next year as the the published NFF does not take into account:* This is based on last Autumn’s census data. New formula will be based on October 2021 census data.
* Transfer to High Needs Block and Growth fund, as agreed by Schools Forum in January 2021.

Allocations will be modelled in December using APT (Authority Proforma Tool) and brought to Schools Forum for approval in January 2021.  |
| **Item 5** | **NFF Consultation** |
|  | PH shared paper for information. There is a DfE consultation regarding Fair School Funding for all which closes on 30th September - the link is included in the paper. London Councils have submitted a collective response on behalf of all London authorities and PH will share a copy with members. PH noted that the draft response from Merton is attached to the paper as an annex - this is supported by EF and NW on behalf of the Local Authority. If members would like to add anything to this, they can contact PH or AG. Schools are also welcome to submit an individual response if they wish.  |
| **Item 6** | **Any Other Business**  |
|  | FP queried if Schools Forum members would like to resume “in person” meetings at any stage. HD noted that the virtual meetings are helpful logistically. It was agreed to consider a blended approach going forward, with the next meeting taking place virtually.  |

Date of next meeting: 3rd November 2021, 4pm